

**CITY OF**



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*San Rafael*

Mayer

Director of Public Works

**Council Members**

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August 14, 1997

File No. 07 06 20

Ms. Diane Steinhauser  
Deputy District Director  
Department of Transportation  
Box 23660  
Oakland, CA 94623-0660

**RE: Comments on DEIR for the Marin 101 IJOV Gap Closure Project**

Dear Diane:

The draft environmental document for the Marin 101 HOV Gap Closure Project through the City of San Rafael was reviewed by the City Council, the Citizens Advisory Group on Caltrans, and City staff at a workshop meeting held on August 6, 1997. A number of issues were discussed that need to be transmitted to you. The comments are generally grouped into the following areas: Right of way acquisition, visual, noise, the ultimate project configuration, and socioeconomic.

**Right of Way Issues:**

- A. The City is very concerned about (lie proposed 70 foot take on Francisco Blvd. West. The City and Caltrans agreed in past years that the ultimate take along this corridor would be a maximum of 55 feet. Consequently, development approvals 4101 were established using this corridor. The additional take of 15 feet would impact the businesses along this corridor. There would be a loss of required parking making the sites deficient in the required number of parking spaces. There would be a complete loss of any setback from the new roadway resulting in a severe visual impact in this corridor because tire landscaping would be eliminated from the frontages. In one case, the back of sidewalk would be at the front of the building. It is recommended that Caltrans reconsider this additional 15 foot take. There may be options to consider in the ultimate future configurations that could accommodate the 15 foot reduction in right of way take. If a reversible HOV lane configuration is considered as a long term interim project, there may not be the need for this additional width. The second auxiliary lane from I-580 to northbound 101 should be reviewed from an operational standpoint. It appears that this second lane would actually increase congestion on 101 northbound given the myriad of weaving movements

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would occur in the ultimate configuration in this corridor. This also could eliminate the need for the additional take. City staff have been directed to work with Caltrans to seek a reasonable solution to this serious issue.

- B. After the completion of the right of way acquisition and completion of the construction, serious consideration should be given to the assembly of parcels, where feasible, to accommodate the construction of housing to replace that lost by the project. Caltrans should consider moving existing structures, if possible, to vacant sites to preserve the housing stock. If this is not feasible, then assembling parcels for construction by others is strongly recommended. In the Francisco Blvd. corridor, the excess right of way could be utilized to replace the parking lost in the roadway relocation and some parcels could be assembled to accommodate additional retail uses. City and Redevelopment Agency staff have been directed to assist Caltrans on this issue. The City requests it be granted the right-of-first refusal on the assembled parcels.

**Visual:**

- A. In areas where mature vegetation is to be removed, it should be replaced with mature vegetation as close as possible to the location where it was removed.
- B. Wherever feasible, consider green walls, berms, and landscaping to provide mitigation of visual and noise impacts. It is recommended that a berm/landscaping/wall configuration be used at Mission and Irwin Streets similar to that on the southbound central San Rafael offramp.
- C. The visual impact of the soundwalls should be sensitive to and reflect Marin County's ambiance as a quasi rural area. Long linear stretches of walls should be mitigated, where feasible, with landscaping so as not to be monotonous to drivers or residents. The existing walls should be retrofitted, if possible, to match the new ones.
- D. It is noted that the proposed landscape buffer in the southbound only alternative will be eliminated under the ultimate project. It is recommended that the existing metal beam guard rail on the east side of 101 northbound be replaced with a similar treatment proposed for the west side.
- E. Delete the proposed soundwall located on the northbound viaduct structure from Fourth St. to Irwin St. The existing structure may not have the structural capacity to accommodate the additional weight of this wall. The visual impact of this wall (14 to 16 feet) would be significant.

- F. The City is concerned about the design of these walls and is desirous of assuring that proper attention is paid to coordinating with the City to insure that a pleasing appearance results. The Council has directed City staff to work with Caltrans, the Advisory Group and a member of the Design Review Board to achieve this goal.
- G. Special consideration should be given to deter the graffiti problem and the long term costs incurred to remove same. Landscaping may be a way to mitigate this problem.

**Noise:**

- A. While this may not be strictly a noise issue, it is recommended that Caltrans consider the relocation of the soundwall to the outside of the transit corridor right of way. This would mitigate the impacts of the future use of the transit corridor. Caltrans should explore the feasibility of this with City and Bridge District staff. The relocation of this wall would also alleviate the concern of the remaining neighbors as it relates to the maintenance of the transit corridor and the resolution of potential security problems with transients.
- B. Caltrans should perform the necessary analysis to address the issue of reflected noise. The existing conditions in this corridor should be used to calculate the impact of the relocated soundwalls rather than studies for other locations. Group Chairman Cooper has submitted comments at the public hearing in this regard. His comments should be carefully considered.

**Ultimate Project:**

- A. The City strongly recommends that Caltrans consider an interim project as a means to address the HOV needs in the northbound direction. It would seem appropriate to consider a reversible HOV lane as a practical interim project to the ultimate long term proposal considering the very high cost of the ultimate solution. The reversible HOV would provide congestion relief in the short term while funding is being sought for the ultimate project.
- B. The consideration of the reversible HOV as an interim project would also mitigate certain air quality issues sooner rather than later at some intersections under the jurisdiction of the city.

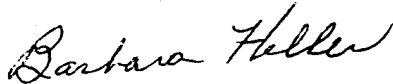
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**Socioeconomic:**

- A. It appears that the references to future housing opportunities and future jobs are inconsistent with ABAG projections for Marin County. Also, the recent Calthorpe study has different projections for the same issues. It is recommended that the various studies be reconciled for consistency.
- B. There will be a loss of sales tax revenue to the City as a result of the removal of the Chevrolet and Buick dealerships. As referenced above, there may be an opportunity to place one of these uses on an assembled parcel in the vicinity. Mr. Ken Nordhoff, Administrative Services Director, can supply Caltrans with the projected sales tax loss amounts.
- C. Properties scheduled for acquisition should be checked against the City's historic building survey.

These comments constitute the full review by the City of San Rafael. The City of San Rafael fully endorses the southbound only HOV Alternative and recommends its selection as the preferred alternative for implementation according to the schedule laid out by your department.

Very Truly Yours,



Barbara Heller  
Vice Mayor

BH/DB:am

cc: Mayor and City Council  
Citizens Advisory Group on Caltrans  
Community Development Department  
Public Works Department